

March 27, 2009

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Katchen Coley, member of the Middletown Conservation Committee, Ct. Land Conservation Council Steering Council, the Middletown Garden Club (The Garden Club of America)
191 Maple Shade Rd., Middletown, Ct. 06457

RE; Senate Bill 828 sec 1w

I am writing to you to express the alarm of my fellow members of the above committees over the proposal to co-opt dedicated revenues generated by the Community Investment Act (CIA) into the State's General Fund. Since this Act was passed in 2005 establishing a \$30 surcharge on real estate recording fees in Town Clerks' offices, some \$15 to 20 million a year has been raised to improve the landscape and quality of life in Connecticut. This dependable source of funding has made all the difference to efforts to preserve open space and farmland, preserve and restore historic structures, and provide affordable housing. In its young lifetime, it has made a big difference to 130 of our State's communities

For example let me tell you about what it has done for my town, Middletown. In the short time since CIA went into effect, Middletown has preserved property it never could have afforded on its own. The 131 acres of what is known as the "Hubbard Property" drains into the Sumner Brook in South Middletown. It boasts of steep rocky slopes covered with dense woods and a high open field with an incredible view all the way to Hartford. CIA awarded Middletown \$500,000 to match the City's contribution, thus preserving this valuable passive recreation resource for future generation. Furthermore, the CIA funds have enabled the State to offer another \$500,000 toward the hoped-for preservation of some 44 acres of prime farmland on Route 17.

Before the CIA existed, we were dependent on very irregular means for protecting property – mainly State bonding. Several times our town lost beautiful pieces of land or farms because the Bond Commission failed to meet and release monies that had been authorized by the General Assembly. What a loss for our grandchildren - you know too well, that once open land is gone, it is gone forever!

This Act has made a critical contribution not only to the health of our State's economy but to enhancing the qualities that make it such a desirable place to live.

It is vital that you preserve the funds of the Community Investment Act for the purposes for which it was created!